ROBERT KIRKMAN LORENZO DE FELICI MATHEUS LOPES

VOID RIVALS

image

#03

ENERGON UNIVERSE

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CLAIM?! YOU CLAIM US?!

I AM PROPERTY TO NO ONE!

VZAPP VZAPP

WHOA! YOU'RE FAST!

FINE! MAYBE I'LL RELEASE YOU--BUT I'M KEEPING THE SHIP!

ZAKK ZAKK

WRAMM

DARAK!

SAVE YOURSELF.

SOME AGORRIAN YOU ARE.

WRAKK

THAP

ON YOUR FEET.

THAT... IS *NOT* A PILOT'S WEAPON.

I AM NO MERE PILOT.

UUUGH.

I'M JUST TRYING TO EARN A LIVING! I'VE GOT A ***WIFE AND KIDS*** TO WORRY ABOUT!

COME BACK!

ZAKK

ZAKK

SPAKK

SPAKK

YOU WERE ***ADRIFT!***

BEING TURNED IN FOR A BOUNTY ***HAS*** TO BE BETTER THAN BEING STRANDED IN ***DEEP SPACE!***

NO?

OKAY. I'M NOT GOING TO CHASE YOU.

JOKES ON YOU, ANYWAY.

I'M NOT THE MOST DANGEROUS THING ON THIS SHIP.

NOW, LET'S LOOK AT THIS SORRY EXCUSE FOR A SHIP YOU'VE BROUGHT ME...

THIS VESSEL IS *ENORMOUS.*

YEAH. LOTS OF PLACES FOR US TO *HIDE.*

WELL... MAYBE WE SHOULD FIND SOME *FOOD* FIRST.

I'LL SCAN THE GENERAL AREA FOR SIGNS OF FOOD STORAGE.

"NO MERE PILOT", HUH?

CARE TO *EXPAND* ON THAT?

NO.

AFTER EVERYTHING, YOU STILL DON'T ***TRUST*** ME? YOU WOUND ME.

IT WAS AN IMPORTANT MISSION. I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU HOW DIRE THINGS ARE FOR MY PEOPLE.

THEY SENT SOMEONE WHO ***WOULDN'T*** FAIL.

WRAMM

LOT OF GOOD IT DID THEM...

CAREFUL. I DON'T THINK WE NEED TO BE ***ADVERTISING*** OUR LOCATION.

OH, WE ARE BEING MONITORED. I DETECT BOTH VISUAL AND AUDIO RECORDINGS.

THANKS FOR THE HEADS UP.

HE DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND US BEING IN THIS AREA, *HUH?* THAT'S...

...DISCONCERTING.

SHUNK

CURIOUS...

IT'S AN ***OBVIOUS*** TRAP. WE INVESTIGATE THE DARKENED ROOM, ONLY TO FIND OUT IT'S A CELL WHEN THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND US.

THE DENSITY OF THIS DOOR RELATIVE TO OTHERS WOULD INDICATE THAT--

KLAKK KLAKK

AAAGH!!

WRAMM

YOU OKAY?

ALIVE.

IF I CAN GET IT BACK INTO THE CELL--CAN YOU CLOSE THE DOOR?

VZAKK

I CAN TRY!

VZAKKT

VAKK

IF YOU CAN GET ME TO THE CONTROL PANEL, I CAN ACCESS THE CONTROLS.

EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

IT'S WORKING-- GET READY!

I'M DOING MY BEST!

ZZAACKK

ALMOST THERE!

THAT'S IT. I'M IN.

I'M READY!

ZZAAPP

OKAY! PUNCH IT!

THUNK

WHUMP

YOU MOVE MORE LIKE A ZERTONIAN *WARRIOR* THAN *PILOT.*

DOES THIS SEEM LIKE SOMETHING I WOULD SPEAK TO AN *AGORRIAN* ABOUT?

SURVEILLANCE DEVICES STILL OPERATIONAL.

I HOPE HE'S GETTING A GOOD SHOW.

STRANGERS? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

UH...

RELEASE ME, AND I CAN GET YOU OUT OF HERE. I'M CAPTIVE HERE, TOO. WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER.

GO AHEAD. CAN'T BE WORSE THAN THE BIG MONSTER.

SHAKK

WAIT!

ON SECOND THOUGHT...

DO NOT BE ALARMED. I MEAN YOU NO HARM.

OUR INTERESTS ARE **ALIGNED.** I DESIRE ESCAPE. SAME AS YOU.

COME. I KNOW WHERE THIS BRUTE KEEPS MY SHIP.

I HAVE NO KNOWN MATCHES IN MY DATABASE FOR THIS LIFE FORM.

WE'RE MEETING A LOT OF THOSE ON THIS MISSION.

HE SEEMS NICER THAN THE OTHER GUY. WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LOSE?

SKUXXOID IS A **NUISANCE.** I HAVE MANY DEALINGS WITH MANY CIVILIZATIONS ACROSS THE COSMOS.

MY KIND HAVE MADE **ENEMIES.**

ONCE YOUR KIND ARE BLAMED FOR THE **AGE OF WRATH,** A LARGE SWATH OF SENTIENT LIFE REFUSES TO FORGET, NO MATTER THE CENTURIES PASSED.

AFTER YOU HAVE AIDED IN ME RETURNING TO MY SHIP, I WILL BE IN YOUR **DEBT.** THAT DEBT WILL BE PAID WHEN I DELIVER YOU TO WHATEVER DESTINATION YOU SO CHOOSE.

GETTING OUT OF HERE WOULD BE A GOOD START. AFTER THAT, WE'LL TALK.

FAIR ENOUGH. THIS WAY.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THE LOCATION OF YOUR SHIP?

I DIDN'T BOARD AS A **PRISONER.**

ALMOST THERE.

OKAY, OKAY. THAT'S *ENOUGH!*

I THINK YOUR FUN ADVENTURE ON MY *ROCKEROID* HAS FINALLY COME TO AN END.

DON'T HESITATE, ALLIES. **SLAY** THIS **VICIOUS BEAST** AT ONCE SO WE CAN ESCAPE WITH HASTE!

I WOULDN'T TRUST THIS ONE, FRIENDS. HE'LL TURN ON YOU THE MOMENT YOU'RE ALONE WITH HIM.

CROSS MY HEART AND HOPE TO DIE.

FRIENDS?

RELEASING THAT CREATURE GAVE ME MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME TO CROSSCHECK YOU IN MY DATABASE.

THERE'S NOT A ***SINGLE*** SYSTEM WITH A BOUNTY ON YOU. UNLIKE THIS QUINTESSON.

I ONLY HURT PEOPLE IF I'M ***PAID*** TO. YOU'RE ***WORTHLESS*** TO ME. YOU'RE FREE TO GO. IN FACT, I'D LIKE TO MAKE A ***DEAL*** WITH YOU.

THAT SORRY EXCUSE FOR A SHIP I ***RESCUED*** YOU FROM IS MADE OF A RARE ALLOY THAT ALMOST MATCHES ***EXACTLY*** WHAT MY FRIEND, SLIZARDO, WAS LOOKING FOR.

I'LL TRADE YOU THIS NEBULON TRANSPORT FOR IT. IT'S OLD, PRE-HIVE ERA, BUT ***MUCH*** FASTER THAN YOURS. ***VERY*** GOOD TRADE.

WHICH ONE IS THE NEBULON SHIP?

THIS IS AN **OUTRAGE!**

YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY GOING TO MAKE A **DEAL** WITH HIM, ARE YOU?!

ALL IN ALL... NOT A BAD TURN OF EVENTS.

HE WAS EVEN NICE ENOUGH TO GIVE US SOME FOOD.

IF YOU CAN REALLY CALL IT THAT...

OH, COME ON. HOW CAN YOU BE SO *NEGATIVE?*

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I WAS PRETTY SURE WE'D BE *DEAD* BY NOW.

I SUPPOSE I STILL FIND IT HARD TO BE OPTIMISTIC. WE CALL IT *"CAUTION"*.

OH, WHERE'S THE FUN IN THAT? HANDROID, WHAT'S OUR CURRENT ETA FOR THE SACRED RING?

TWO DAYS, SIXTEEN HOURS.

SEE? HOW YOU AREN'T *THROWING A PARTY* IS *BEYOND* ME.

...

GOT A SECOND TO SPEAK?

HUH? YEAH. SORRY.

GIMME A SEC.

SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND?

HOW DO YOU PLAN ON HANDLING THINGS WHEN WE'RE BACK?

MY FATHER'S A LOT OF THINGS, BUT HE'LL LISTEN. I PLAN TO GO STRAIGHT TO ***HIM*** WITH THIS. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.

ASSUMING HE WANTS TO SEE ME...

WE NEED TO TREAD ***CAREFULLY.*** SOMEONE ON BOTH SIDES IS KEEPING THIS SECRET FOR A REASON.

I LIKE THE IDEA OF BRINGING PEACE TO OUR PEOPLE AS MUCH AS YOU... BUT SOME MAY NOT ***WANT*** PEACE.

WHEN THIS NEWS GETS OUT, THOSE PEOPLE WON'T BE VERY POPULAR, I'D GUESS.

HONESTLY, SOLILA... IS THAT YOUR THING, WORRYING?

I'LL BE CAUTIOUS, OF COURSE, BUT COME ON.

LOOK HOW WELL WE'RE GETTING ALONG? LET'S BE EXCITED FOR EVERYONE ELSE TO START LIVING THIS WAY.

...

LOGISTICS.

WE'RE ABOUT THREE HOURS AWAY. HOW DO YOU WANT TO HANDLE OUR ARRIVAL?

ZERTONIA OR AGORRA? WHY NOT *BOTH?*

THE ONLY WAY THAT MAKES SENSE TO ME IS WE LOAD UP INTO ESCAPE PODS AND GO TO OUR RESPECTIVE HALVES OF THE RING, LEAVE THE SHIP ADRIFT.

EITHER OF US SHOWING UP WITH THE OTHER IS JUST GOING TO COMPLICATE THINGS.

TRUE. OKAY. *AGREED.*

HEY, CONGRATS!

FOR WHAT?

WE *SURVIVED.*

WE ACTUALLY DID IT.

WE'RE HOME.

DO I DETECT ACTUAL *EXCITEMENT* IN YOUR VOICE?

I DO NOT.

OUR APPROACH HAS BEEN DETECTED.

WE WILL NEED TO SEND SIGNALS TO OUR PEOPLE AS SOON AS WE LAUNCH THE ESCAPE PODS TO AVOID HOSTILE ACTION.

LET'S MOVE.

WAIT A SECOND.

WHAT IS IT?

WE WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED IF IT NOT FOR YOU. YOU WERE THE ONE WHO TOOK A CHANCE TO SEE IF WE COULD COOPERATE.

WERE IT UP TO ME, I MAY HAVE ***KILLED*** YOU AND WASTED AWAY ON THAT ROCK. MY ***AGGRESSION*** WOULD HAVE ENDED US BOTH.

THANK YOU.

HEH. SOME ZERTONIAN YOU ARE. NO TIME FOR MODESTY, SO I AGREE. ***I'M GREAT.*** HOPEFULLY, I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN SOON, AND WE CAN TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH WE LIKE EACH OTHER.

GOOD LUCK DOWN THERE.

NO. GOOD LUCK TO ***YOU.***

YOU'LL NEED IT MORE THAN ME.

I'M SORRY.

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO VOIDRIVALS@SKYBOUND.COM

Welcome to the very first ENERGON UNIVERSE mailbag. I'm Sean, the editor, joined by Robert. There's no greater joy than cracking the seal of a brand-new letters page, especially to respond to all the folks who were genuinely surprised to by the first issue's reveal. We have plenty of letters to respond to, so maybe we start with the easy ones first?

Sounds good to me! This is Robert. I'm in italics. Is that confusing or clear? Can you keep track of who is saying what? I'm the goofier one. Most of the time. Let's dive in!

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Is Void Rivals an ongoing series?

Yes.

Is it going to continue to intersect with the new Transformers stories?

Absolutely.

Could MASK (Kenner) be a part of the Energon Universe?

What's a MASK?

Thank you.

JT

I just want to state for the record that I know EXACTLY what M.A.S.K. is.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Hey Kirkman and Crew!

Just Finished Issue #1 of Void Rivals and I'm super excited to learn why Jetfire was offline on that planetoid for millions of years ("Stellar Cycles"?)! A reference to the G1 Autobots and Decepticons being dormant on Earth for millions of years, maybe?

See TRANSFORMERS #1 for more details!

Oh, we're giving details like that away? I just read the completed issue 1 by Daniel Warren Johnson and team, and I have to admit... I haven't felt this much joy reading a comic in a while. It was like I was a kid again, but things were somehow more awesome. Buckle up, folks, this stuff is GREAT.

I'm a big fan of your work and Transformers, but I honestly never spent the same amount of time on G.I. Joe. Will I be lost in this shared universe if I don't have the nostalgia glasses for both franchises?

No. DUKE #1 and COBRA COMMANDER #1 were written for readers with no prior knowledge of G.I. JOE. Will current and longtime fans see which bits of lore we're exploring? Sure. But the merging of these franchises will create lots of new and unexpected origins and outcomes… and if we're not engaging and surprising everyone, we're doing our jobs wrong.

Looking forward to Issue 2 and Transformers in October!

- Andrew Hopkinson

And DUKE and COBRA COMMANDER, Andrew! Don't forget those. Trust me, you're going to want to be plugged into the Joe side of the Energon Universe, too.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Howdy Void Rivals team!!

First off, WHAT??? WE'RE IN THE TRANSFORMERS UNIVERSE??

Now that that's out of my system, I AM SO READY!!

From having both Kirkman AND De Felici back together! I can't wait to see how this new universe extension

works out!!

I loved the very subtle introduction to both the Argonian and the Zertonian rivalry, but especially within a forced survival situation is always a fun story telling device!

When Jetfire was introduced, I literally screamed IS THAT A TRANSFORMER?? No, it can't be. Right? Kirkman probably created another type of organic/mechanical species for the story! Then he mentioned Cybertron and I was like HE IS A TRANSFORMER!!!

Anyway, love the art as always Lorenzo! And Robert, you're ready to take more of my money as always! See y'all next issue!

Love,

Andi Rose Tiscareño

El Paso, Texas

Welcome back to these back pages, Andi! We've been holding onto this surprise for so long, it's awesome to hear when it worked.

A little bummed you didn't recognize Jetfire on sight, but I'll forgive it. This time. The next time a Transformer shows up, I expect instant recognition!

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Dear Void Rivals Crew,

I don't usually check out new comics on Wednesdays anymore. Sure, I look over the new comics wall, but more often than not, I shrug and return to the counter to pick up the meager pile that makes up my pull list. Even more rarely do I find myself adding a new title to that pull list. As I've gotten older (*sigh* so much older...) I've found my love for comics remains, but my love for mainstream comics has dwindled quite a bit. These days I find myself enjoying the work of many fellow Indie Comic artists than I do anything printed by the big name companies. However, when I saw a new title written by that Walking Dead guy... No, sorry, that Invincible guy... Sorry, sorry, that fellow Savage Dragon fan, I had to scoop it up and thumb through. I liked what I saw. The art was nice. I enjoyed the line work. I did feel that it was a little too much like Enemy Mine, but suddenly I turned the page and there was a Unicron-Damned Jetfire in this new comic.

You can never be TOO much like Enemy Mine... right?

And just like that this book became something more than it was the moment before. I actually added a new title to my meager pile of comics this week. After returning home and properly reading the entire book, I called The Comics Place and had the crew add it to my pull list. Well done. I am intrigued to see what happens to our stranded protagonists. I happily await details on the new universe they share. I ponder what Soundwave is up to and which book will reveal that information.

See TRANSFORMERS #1. Soundwave has always been my favorite… and I'm kinda surprised that he's also everyone else's favorite?

I look forward to the next issue of Void Rivals. In the meantime, I have included a Jetfire in my letter as well, because everyone loves Surprise Jetfire.

Ken Albery

Whoa? Jetfire in the letter, too?! I'm shocked!

While the gimmick of a Transformer showing up added the needed and planned spice, I promise as the world of VOID RIVALS unfolds, any thoughts of Enemy Mine will soon be far in the rearview.

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Dear Mr. Kirkman,

This is still just surreal that I actually ended up having second thoughts on possibly writing this email, but first of all I just want to let out such a big thank you! I was born in 2001 so my childhood revolved around the Unicron Trilogy, Transformers Animated, and Transformers Prime but regardless I cannot think of a moment in my life where I was not obsessed over the next toyline, next tv show, movie, etc. but unfortunately, I never really hoped too much on the Transformers comic world whether it was dreamwave or IDW and that has been to this day one of my biggest regrets when it comes to my fandom of this franchise was the moment I wanted to start getting into the comic world, I was always a little too late. But after reading Void Rivals #1 seeing Skyfire (sorry Jetfire) appear in that two page spread, I transformed (Pun intended) from a 21 year old back to a 10 year old who just walked out of the theater watching the rerun of the original animated movie in 1986 Now finally to my question (sorry I talk a lot if you can't tell) but I am curious if there might be a place for Rom the Space Knight in the Energon Universe? I fell in love with your writing and world building with Invincible and am over the moon to see what your Energon Universe has in store. But of course I would just like to thank you again from the bottom of my heart for keeping my childhood alive and giving me the opportunity to jump on a fresh, new Transformers and GI Joe comic line.

Sincerely,

Matthew

Hasbro has a lot of really great concepts in their stable. ROM is definitely high on the list of cool. That said, as far as any expansion of the Energon Universe is concerned, I wouldn't expect it any time soon, and the Transformers and G.I. Joe worlds, along with the new world of VOID RIVALS is, frankly, going to PACK this universe quite well, so it's not like any extra characters will be NEEDED.

But you never know...

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Mr.Kirkman and crew.

Holy smokes! Transformers?! I grew up on Transformers. Then as I got older, The Walking Dead. I've seen your collection posts and things on Twitter, and it's always warmed my heart that my favorite comic writer loves Transformers too. And now this... WOW. Okay, so a few questions:

1) Will you be pulling inspiration from all Transformers media? G1, Armada, Prime, etc.?

Yes. G1 is the primary inspiration, but there's all sorts of cool stuff to explore. We're playing the long game.

I have a particular fondness for TRANSFORMERS: ANIMATED. I'm chomping at the bit to see BULKHEAD.

2) Does this mean Invincible characters could ever show up in this series?

Unlikely. But not impossible.

That's everything I can think of for now without asking about spoilers (like if Unicron and Primus will show up, for example.)

Have a blessed day everyone, I am SO EXCITED!

Matthew and Elsie Short

Monterey, Tennessee

No one is more excited about this stuff than I am. I promise.

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Hi Mr. Kirkman.

Void Rivals #1 is an excellent story and really good art because it grabbed my attention at the very start and has me wanting more! I enjoyed transformers and GI Joe growing up and your story is reigniting my interest again! I have a lot of boxes to go through to find where my transformers and GI Joes are.

What is the name of the computer chip that is on Darak's right hand? Computer chip has protocol that states avoid calling by name so as not to form a bond or encourage familiarity. Darak then says, "BUDDY, I think protocol just went out the window." I hope a nice bond is eventually formed kind of like Kitt the car and Michael Knight in the1980s TV series Knight Rider.

Handroid. What Darak wears on his right hand is a handroid. Maybe the breakout character of 2023, if I'm allowed to declare such things.

I very much like the art and colors. Having some difficulty reading light shade of red letters on white. Easier for me when letters are white on a darker color. Black letters on white are okay. I got my cardboard 3D googles out, left eye color is red and right eye color is blue. Looking through blue color able to read red letters on white a little better. I'm making an appointment to see my optometrist and getting new glasses.

Tell me more!

I am excited about Void Rivals, Skybound Universe, Image, Hasbro Toys, Transformers, and GI Joes!!

Sincerely, Richard Moore in Orange Park, FL

Thanks for writing in, Richard! Sorry some of the lettering was hard on the eyes. Sometimes Rus Wooton's work is just too great for our mere mortal optics to withstand!

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Hello Robert Kirkman and the rest of the Void Rivals Crew!

What a great first issue and reveal at the end! I am already looking forward to the next issue, and cannot wait to see what is in store for the Energon Universe! It is looking like a strong starting lineup, and hopefully we will see some big crossover events someday!

I was very happy to see that Larry Hama will be returning for GI Joe: A Real American Hero! From the coverage I have read online, the Energon Universe Joe books will be mini-series. Can we expect to see an ongoing GI Joe series, one that is set within the EU?

Yes—we are continuing to publish Larry Hama's historic run. ARAH #53 was the first issue of a comic book I ever owned. That's not part of the Energon Universe… but the road to G.I. JOE starts with DUKE (December 2023) and COBRA COMMANDER (January 2024).

Also, with yourself and Skybound now doing these books, is there a possibility that we will see past runs of GI Joe/Transformers books get collected edition printings/reprints?

Yes, more announcements soon. If there's anything you'd like to see collected, please let us know!

Cheers!

Brock Brandt

Clarksville, Iowa

P.S. I am also hoping to see Darak and Solila alongside my collection someday!

If you mean toy form, fingers crossed!

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Wanted to ask what Decepticons are going to be appearing in void and Transformers, I really love issue #1 with the jet fire reveal keep on the best work

- Zen

We've publicly revealed that Starscream, Soundwave, Skywarp, Rumble, and Lazerbeak all appear in TRANSFORMERS. As for Decepticons in VOID RIVALS… keep reading.

• • • • • • • • • • • • •

Whatever happened to that sci-fi graphic novel called "The Passenger" that you were making with Charlie Adlard?

- Joel

That's not a VOID RIVALS question! Ok, I had to run this one because I ask this question once a year… and still don't have a credible answer. Maybe that's a sign to wrap this up…

Oh my god, Sean! I can't believe you slipped this in. You're going to make Charlie mad at me. The delay is all me. I'm terrible. I really need to wrap that thing up. I have no excuse. PASSENGER 2024!

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Rob,

Loved the first issue of Void Rivals! Art and writing were amazing, and its got me excited for whats to come! Just had a few questions about the future of the Energon universe.

Around how many series would be released in tandem with each other? Would there be individual series for certain characters?

There are four initial series: two ongoing (VOID RIVALS and TRANSFORMERS) and two miniseries (DUKE and COBRA COMMANDER). We're going to keep it to around four series for now, with the two miniseries being replaced by… you'll see.

Also, I grew up as a Transformers fan, but not so much a GI Joe one. Are there are any comics you would recommend reading prior to getting into the universe?

No additional reading required for the Energon Universe, but I definitely recommended checking out Larry Hama's *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*. In fact, we have a special reprint of the first issue coming out this November, to be released alongside the continuation of that legendary run—ARAH #301!

Best of luck with the series, and I'm excited for what comes next!

Kidar Arjune

• • • • • • • • • • • • •

Ok, we'll see you next month as that betrayer Solila delivers Darak to Zertonia, and we also introduce--

-Sean

SHHHHH!!! NO SPOILERS! I feel like we already said WAY TOO MUCH in this letters column.

-Robert

WHOAH!

SPIKE!

SPIKE!!!

FRAM!

AGH!

SPIKE, ARE YOU--?

WHOAH..

WHAT THE HECK...?

WHERE *ARE* WE?

WE...WE HAVE TO GET *OUT* OF HERE! WHAT *IS* THIS THING? SPIKE!

...SPIKE?

THEY LOOK LIKE... I DON'T KNOW. SOME SORT OF ROBOTS.

WHAT ARE THOSE?

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